

# LIVING ORTHODOXY



## *Saint Frideswide: A Greater Life Also in this issue...*

*St. Daniel of Thassos*

*A Concerned Voice: Monk Theophan*

*Fr. Lev Lebedev on Dialogue*

*St. Julian of the Euphrates*

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# LIVING ORTHODOXY

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**Metropolitan of New York & Eastern America**  
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## FROM THE EDITOR

First of all, our profound apologies for the lateness of this (and several other!) issues. Lay the blame at the doorstep of the annual calendar (three different ones) madness, the “crunch” to get the new edition of the Menaion for July off to press (accomplished on Holy Monday), and mission work in Haiti — as well as at all this (the final stages at least) being in essence a “one-man show”.

The next several “catch-up” issues are likely to be mailed in twos, even threes, in the interests of actually getting caught up by late summer (when the madness starts all over again).

Apologies also for the error on the cover and in the table of contents of the last issue. Fr. Theophan's excellent letter actually appears in this issue.

We call your attention as well to two important documents, somewhat a “voice from the past”, the testimony of Fr. Lev Lebedev voicing his concerns about the “Dialogue” which led to the submission to the Moscow Patriarchate of a large part of our Church in 2007.

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## CONTENTS

The Story of St. Frideswide .....	3
Archbishop Averky: Should the Church be in Step with the Times? .....	9
The Life of St. Daniel of Thassos .....	13
A Concerned Voice: Monk Theophanes .....	14
Fr. Lev Lebedev on “Dialogue” .....	16
St. Julian of the Euphrates .....	27

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# THE STORY OF ST. FRIDESWIDE

VIRGIN AND PATRONESS OF OXFORD

by Francis Goldie

## PREFACE

The labors of the Bollandists have left little to be done by a biographer of St. Frideswide. In their exhaustive *Life of the saint*, October, vol. VIII, they publish as their text the *Vita* from the collection of John Capgrave, of which a fine copy occurs in the Tanner MS. XV in the Bodleian Library. It is simply a transcript, with some verbal alterations, and those but few, of the *Life* given by John of Tynemouth in his *Sanctilogium*. Of this the MS, which is in the Cottonian Library at the British Museum (Tiberius E. I.), is one of those which suffered in the great fire of 1731. All that remains of it has lately been restored. The portion containing the *Life of St. Frideswide* (Art. 122, fol. 258-60) has suffered at the top of each leaf only; the rest is distinct and clear. John of Tynemouth wrote about 1366. A still earlier manuscript, probably even of the end of the twelfth century, by an author whose name is unknown, and whose work apparently escaped the notice of the Bollandists, is preserved in the Laudian MS 114, formerly c. 94 in the Bodleian. It is mentioned by Hardy in his *Catalog of Materials*, vol. i part 1st, p. 462. The narrative has evidently served as the basis of John of Tynemouth's work, and he has copied verbatim the words which the anonymous author puts into the mouths of the various speakers. The account given by this writer is much more ample and consecutive than that of his copyist, and leaves one under the impression that Capgrave made bad use of the materials before him. I have ventured therefore to follow the Laudian manuscript, and cannot do better than to give the prologue of its author in full:

"I have collected into one volume, dearest brethren, all that I could learn about the life and virtues of the most blessed Virgin Frideswide — so worthy of all veneration — either in chronicles, or in certain books of authentic histories, or in the catalogs of English saints. Therein it plainly appears that the author of the *Life of that most holy virgin*, whoever he may be, was far from any error in many things, however contemptible he may seem to some supercilious critics who were led to blame him for his simplicity of style, and who thus proved that they cared more for beauty of flowers than for usefulness of fruit."

I have entitled my work *The Story of St. Frideswide*, that I might follow in the footsteps of the simple-hearted author, and so avoid critical examination of details. The main facts are shown by the Bollandists to be worthy of credit, and the holy Church has set the seal of her approval on the holiness of the glorious patroness of Oxford.

Preston, 1880



The upper waters of the river Thames flow through a broad and fertile valley. Just above the spot where the Cherwell adds its tribute to the greater stream, the river is broken up into many courses, girdling rich islets. Many times in the year the waters, swollen by the rains, rise over their banks, and for miles the country is like a lagoon.

In this place, when our story opens — then hardly known to fame — was a small town. It was seated on the north of the river Thames, and guarded on the other side by the swiftly flowing Cherwell. Had the Old Britons chosen the site, protected as it was on almost every side by marsh and stream; or did their conquerors, whose



highroad passed not far from it, plant their standard in the well-watered valley? History does not tell. But when England was a Saxon land and ruled by many kings, an eorlderman, or petty prince, named Dida was lord of Oxenford. This was in the early part of the eighth century, as nearly all chroniclers agree. It was a period of fierce wars between Mercian and West Saxon kings. Though the Christian Faith which St. Augustine and his successors had brought from Rome had triumphed throughout the land, the old lawlessness of the sons of Woden broke out again amidst the clash and excitement of war. Dida was, however, a good Catholic, and his stainless life was an honor and an example to the town in which he lived.

His lady was named Safrida. A happy pair, God blessed them with a girl, who was born to them in their home at Oxford. She was baptized without delay and called by the name of Frideswide. Her good parents took all pains to bring up their child carefully. Soon they saw what a treasure of wit and holiness Heaven had given them. When she was five years old, a holy and learned lady, Algiva,\* was charged with her education.

So apt a pupil did the little Frideswide prove that in some five or seven months she learned by heart the whole of David's Psalter. As her mind opened out beneath the teaching of Algiva, so the love of her crucified Lord filled her soul, and for His sake she courted suffering. She afflicted her innocent body, ever girt with a hair shirt. Her only food was barley bread and a few herbs; her only drink was water. She sought upon her knees in prayer the face of Him she loved. And dear to God, dear too was she to all around her. No work was too lowly or too poor for the nobly born maiden to do for the poorest of the poor; no sorrow which did not win her sympathy, no want within her power to relieve which she did not relieve.

While she was yet but young she lost her mother. No wonder that, in rough times, St.

\*Leland, *Collectanea*, London, 1774, vol. i, p. 279, quoting from a life of the saint by an unknown author, states in the margin "Algiva perhaps was the abbess of Our Lady's at Winchester." Dugdale, however, states that this house was not founded till the reign of Alfred (vol. ii, p. 451). Capgrave says that Algiva was the saint's nurse, and had suckled her when a babe.

Frideswide sought safer shelter. No wonder that the love of an Eternal Spouse had taken early possession of her heart. Frideswide again and again gently urged her father to make himself ready for the journey on which her mother's soul had gone before. To send on to safe-keeping for everlasting life his earthly goods, she persuaded him to build a church in honor of the Holy Trinity, Our Lady, and all the saints.

Then she begged a still greater favor — that she might be allowed to dedicate herself body and soul to God in this new sanctuary. Dida bravely gave back to His Lord what his Divine Master had given him. He built her a dwelling by the church where, with twelve other ladies of gentle birth, she retired from the world. At the eorlderman's request, the bishop of the diocese, Edgar of the see of Lincoln, consecrated the thirteen virgins in their new home. Not content with his first gifts, Dida endowed the church and convent with broad lands and farmsteads.

Living now for God alone, our saint gave herself still more entirely to prayer and penance. Like the Apostle of Ireland, when all the world was at rest, a hundred times each night she bent her knees in worship of God. The enemy of our race envied both her peace on earth and the reward she was amassing for hereafter. He was too wise to tempt her directly to ill, but he took the old, old way of drawing her into evil under the seeming of good. He came to her in a vision of light, under the form of her Divine Lord, with troops of shining angels around him — devils in disguise.

"Come," said he to St. Frideswide, "come, my beloved, come; for the time has arrived for you to receive the crown that will never wither, of glory eternal — a crown thou hast so well deserved. Come and, prostrate, adore my footprints, as long thou hast desired to do; for I have willed to appear to thee that thou mayest see me even in this passing life after whom thou hast sighed and for whom thou art athirst with love, that so in transport of adoration thou mayest, without bodily pain, gain the joy of eternal life."

To him the maiden, taught by the Spirit of Truth, made answer: "Wretch! How canst thou promise to others what, because of thy pride, thou



neither hast nor ever canst have? What has undying life to do with thee, who ledest ever a dying life, and liest forever ruined and beneath the scourge? I, too, wretched and miserable sinner that I am, would share with thee thy ruin, had not my Savior Christ, Whom thou pretendest to be, forestalled me by His mercy. For He has been my hope from youth." The proud demon could not bear such lowly words, and fled away with hideous howl and foul smell, leaving St. Frideswide calm and unmoved in the strength of her prayer.

Then her enemy tried a fresh means to ruin her. Her father had gone to his rest, dying of fever, after the building of the convent. The wicked Algar,\* one of the great nobles of Mercia, like too many of the lawless princes of his day a pagan in life even if not in creed, had heard of or seen the pearl of Oxford. In his coarse breast the devil stirred up a brutal passion against the holy nun, which Algar concealed under the name of "love". He determined to satisfy it by strength, if not by stratagem. Thus, as he lived afar off, he sent some of his nobles to lay before her an offer marriage, with orders that should she decline it they must carry her off by force.

They came to the convent and laid before her their message. Strong in God's strength, she swiftly gave them a calm and courteous answer: "Had I thought of marriage," she answered in a lowly voice, "I would not have refused my lord Algar. But as I am now wedded to Christ, the Everlasting Lord, surely it would be dreadful, think you not, to set Him aside and take a man as short-lived as myself?"\*\*

Then the embassy threw off all reserve and threatened the virgin with ruin worse than death.

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\* Camden in his *Brittania*, vol. ii, p. 196, says, on the authority of Thomas Talbot, that at the period of St. Frideswide, in the reign of Ethelbald, King of the Mercians, in 716, Leofric was Earl of Leicester, to whom succeeded in direct line Algar I, and Algar II. King Ethelbald's character bears an unpleasant resemblance to that of the Algar of our story. A manuscript in the Bodleian calls Algar King of Leiceister. Hearne makes Dida a subject of Algar. The Bollandist writer of the saint's life hesitates to say who the tyrant might be. Capgrave states that Dida was living when his daughter returned from Abingdon.

She answered with St. Agnes: "You cannot stain my honor, if in my heart I withhold consent."

As they rushed upon her to drag her from the holy place, with tears St. Frideswide called upon God her Helper, and He struck her assailants blind and so saved her from their hands. The news got abroad, and the townspeople flocked in. When their first surprise was over, they begged the saint — perhaps it was from fear of Algar's wrath — to implore God to give back sight to the blind men. She prayed a Christian's prayer, and when they again could see they flung themselves with changed hearts at her feet to beg pardon for their attempted crime, and then went home, to tell their lord of the strange ending to their adventure.

The warning, however, was wasted on the king, whom passion had made mad. He did not recognize the hand of God in what had happened, but rather put it down to charms and magic. He could not believe that anyone could be strong enough to oppose his will. In a fury of disappointed desire, he called for his horse and rode off to Oxford.

In the meanwhile, as was her wont, St. Frideswide was spending the night in tranquil prayer when lo! an angel came before her. "Knowest thou not," he said, "that tomorrow Earl Algar will be at the city gate? He comes to satisfy his passion, if in any way he can succeed. Fear not, for our Lord Jesus Christ will guard the sweet abode thou hast made for Him in thy spotless heart. The prince will return baffled and mocked and punished with perpetual blindness. Hasten then down to the riverside, and thou wilt find there a boat made ready for thee by God, and a guide, a steersman, for thy journey." The saint thanked her Lord for His protection and, taking two sisters with her, hurried to the Thames.

There she found a youth of heavenly appearance, clothed in dazzling white, who with words of

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\*\*We venture a translation of the metrical version of this speech in the Rawlinson manuscript:

"'Tis loathsome to desert Heaven's King,  
I count as dung the favors promised me;  
Nor can I wed, my Husband living still;  
Nor to a lower king myself submit.  
Blameful would't be my first Love to despise;  
Fool must be, who asks the lowest first."



comfort seated them in a boat. In a short hour's space, he landed them some ten miles down the stream, near to where Abingdon now stands. No sooner were they ashore than boat and boatman vanished. A dense forest covered the countryside, broken only by any clearing the monks of Abingdon might have effected around their infant monastery.\*

Near to Abingdon the saint and her companions found a path which led them into the fastnesses of the woods. There the three fugitives sought shelter, and found it in a ruined building, the entrance to which was completely hidden by mantling ivy. It had been built as a cover for the herds of swine which roamed in search of acorns, and were such a large source of revenue to the owners or tenants of the English forests.

Algar by this time had drawn near to Oxford, where he learned that his prey was gone. He made wild threats and offered large bribes to find her hiding-place. The townsfolk swore a solemn oath; they knew not where she was. Even so, Algar vowed he would destroy the place if she were not discovered. But as he rode towards the northern entrance to the town he was stricken, as had been his messengers, with total blindness. The sudden visitation terrified Algar, but it wrought no change in his heart.

Beaten and baffled, he returned home as wicked as when he came [Mabillon in *Ann. Benedict, lib. xx1, xxxiii*, says that at St. Frideswide's prayer Algar regained his sight.] The memory of this event left so deep an impression that till the reign of Henry III no monarch dared to enter what became St. Frideswide's Church.\*\*

Our saint spend three years in the deep solitude of the forest, turning its glades into a cloister of constant prayer, of fasting and watching. God at last made her holiness known and glorified her by

\* The Laud. manuscript and Capgrave call the place Benton, i.e., Benson or Bensington, where the Roman road, Akeman's Street, crossed the Thames. The metrical version gives Bampton as the site of the saint's retreat. But the Balliol manuscript has Bendon, i.e., Abingdon, which is nine miles and a half by the river, answering to the description of being ten miles from Oxford, while Bensington is more than twice that distance, and Bampton cannot be much less.

a miracle. A maiden of Abingdon of good birth had lost her sight by the action, so it was supposed, of an evil spirit. As she was asleep one night, someone stood by her side and bade her go to the dwelling-place of the saint in the wood. There she was to catch a drop of water as it fell from St. Frideswide's hands when washing and with it to bathe her eyes. She was promised that she would regain her sight. As soon as day dawned the maiden told her parents, and they gladly led her to the spot. The saint, no doubt forewarned, allowed her to enter and take of the water — and straightway she saw. The girl and her friends quickly spread the news far and wide.

Fearing perilous fame, St. Frideswide fled from the place. Taking a boat, she and her companions went up the river, past their convent at Oxford a mile or more, to a place belonging to her father called Binsey. She chose the spot because it was near enough to her sisters to be able to give them the help of her guidance, and yet far enough off to be free from frequent visits. Other reasons, too, she had: She did not want to expose her community to fresh danger on account of her; and she wished to flee the notoriety she had gained by her victory over Algar. Her new home was not far from the convent of Wytham which Cilla, the sister of Hean, first abbot of Abingdon, had founded. When the Danes had destroyed this house, Catholic piety erected at no great distance from its site the well-known convent of Godstow.

Under pleasant uplands and not far from the river, with many sluggish watercourses crossing and recrossing the ground around it, was a slight eminence called Thornbury, the Hill of Thorns. Herein, amidst the thickets and fens, in what, when the floods are out becomes an islet, our saint made a little oratory of osiers, roughly covered with planks, in honor of St. Margaret, the virgin-martyr who had overcome the dragon. Hard by, she build

\*\* Some writers say that no king entered Oxford, others that none dared to pass the North Gate, the well-known Boccoardo by St. Michael's Church, whose early tower is so noticeable an object in modern Cornmarket Street. Wikes in his chronicle, A.D. 1275, says even Edward I, although his father had ventured to go in, turned back from the city out of fear of sharing the fate of Algar. The royal palace of Beaumont stood outside the old walls.



herself an humble cell. As there was a lack of drinking-water, at her prayers a well sprang up, which is there to this day. [It has been lovingly restored of late years, and a respectful inscription carved upon the arch above.]

It chanced that a young man was needlessly working on Sunday, cutting down wood at the neighboring village of Sackworth [while it grew into a place of importance because of St. Frideswide's well, it is now no more]. Suddenly the handle of his axe cleaved to his hand as though it had been of red-hot iron. In vain he tried to shake it off; he could not open his fingers or let go his hold. His fearful screams brought his parents and friends to the place. They all proposed, as the sole resource, to seek the aid of St. Frideswide. So they crossed over the river and reached her cell. There, with piteous cries, the young man implored the saint to take compassion on him, and his father and mother joined him in his prayer. St. Frideswide's heart was touched and, asking God for help, she made the sign of the Cross on his hand. The axe fell to the ground, and in a short while the wound was healed.

Another time some fishermen had cast their nets late at night and, while waiting to draw them in, fell asleep. In a sudden frenzy, one of them rushed at his comrade, and was going to tear him like a wild beast with teeth and hands. The others started up, amazed and horrified at what they took for a demonic possession. They succeeded in securing him and, with his hands tied behind his back, led him to Thornbury. Gently, the saint made the saving sign over the raging man, and said: "I adjure thee, Satan, in the name of the Great Son of the Living God, our Lord Jesus Christ, depart from this man, who is made in the image of God, nor dare any more to vex him." At these words the poor man fell to the ground like a corpse. But St. Frideswide laid her hand upon him, and at her words: "Man! Arise in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," he straightway arose in perfect health and strength.

There is a legend which has taken some root in France that, to escape still more completely from the notice of the world, when Cuthred was King of Wessex, St. Frideswide secretly fled across the seas with two companions to Boulogne, intending to

follow the example of King Ini and so many Saxon princes by making a pilgrimage to the center of Christendom. Then — so the story goes — she stopped on her way at a spot not far from Térouanne where, on the top of a hill crowned with wood, and watered by a sparkling fountain, she stayed some time. But finding her new home was too near the English shores, she went on by Rheims, and then across the wild Alps to Rome, where her virtue shone out so brightly — if the legend be true — that a church was built there in her honor. When her devotion was satisfied, she came homewards, passing again through Artois to England.\*

Be this as it may, the village of Bomy, near Boulogne — the place where Charles V and François I concluded a truce — still cherishes the memory of the Oxford saint under the name of St. Frewisse. Her chapel is on the hilltop hard by, and the stream still bears her name, "La fontaine de Ste. Frewisse," which it has borne for more than seven hundred years [Desiderius, Bishop of Artois, as far back as 1187, speaks of this fountain as a place held in veneration, *v. Boll*, Oct. 19, p. 561].

When at length the hour of St. Frideswide's reward drew near, she determined to return to her convent, to give back her soul to God in the place where first she had entered His service in religion. On her coming to Oxford, the whole population turned out to welcome her.

Amongst the crowd of priests and people which poured out to receive her was a young man whom leprosy had made so hideous that, the chronicler says, he looked like a black rock, rough hewn, out of which the hand of a sculptor was going to draw forth a human figure. His voice was almost gone but, as best he could, he murmured out the strange request: "I conjure thee, Maiden Frideswide, by the Almighty God, to kiss me in the name of Jesus Christ, His Only-begotten Son." He bore about him the loathsome disease which then was deemed

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\* The Saxon chronicle says that in 737 Ferthre (Forthere?), Bishop of Sherbourne, went to Rome with Frithogith, the Queen of Essex. The Bollandists dismiss the legend of St. Frideswide's leaving England as without historical basis. Perhaps the name of Frithogith was confounded with that of our saint. Neither is there any record of a church dedicated to her in Rome.



contagious, and never had the lips of man from earliest childhood come near her pure form. Yet, to the amazement of all, on fire with charity, she straightway came up to him and, having first made over him the sign of the Cross, impressed a kiss upon his offensive lips. In an instant, his corrupt skin fell off in scales, and his flesh became as bright and delicate as that of a little child. The whole town was full of wonder, but the more she was praised, all the more humbly did St. Frideswide chastise her body and her soul.

Soon after, when the measure of her merits was full, an angel again stood before her whilst at prayer and delivered her a message from God: "On the 14<sup>th</sup> of November, when the Sunday morning will break in on the night, your last end, Frideswide, is decreed, and you who despised the palace of your earthly father will enter the bridal chamber of the Eternal King, where is unfailing light, with life which knows not death." A very severe fever seized upon her, and her strength began to fail. As she lay on her bed, she told those who were sitting beside her: "Dig for me this day a grave in the Church of the Most Blessed Mary Ever-virgin, Mother of God and of my Lord Jesus Christ, by whose aid I may more easily despise the snares of the malignant spirits, and may with greater surety stand before the judgment-seat of the Son of our Blessed Lady. When tomorrow the memory of His resurrection will be kept, and I this very night, after the third cock-crow shall leave this passing world, I would not wish anyone to be wearied for me by digging on a feast so great and solemn.

Then she begged that the blessed Eucharist might be brought to her. And when she had received it with thanksgiving, she kept on blessing her Lord. As her eyes were fixed on heaven, she beheld coming down towards her the two virgin saints whom she had ever most specially venerated in life. They came and, bowing reverently with joyful accents, she exclaimed: "Welcome, blessed saints! Oh how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness which Thou hast hidden for those who fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for those who hope in Thee! Who will not fear Thee, O Lord, and magnify Thy name, for Thou alone art merciful!

"Lest Thy servant on her way to Thee should be terrified at the onslaught of Satan, Thou hast sheltered the paths of those who go forward. For, even when beaten and confounded, he is wont to bring up the falsehoods of his deceits against conquering souls as they are returning home to Thee from the battlefields. Shelter us as Thou knowest best. Thou hast granted, too, to me to behold on my departure those sainted virgins whom Thou hast granted me of old to love during my life, with a sort of familiar veneration. From this it seems to be evident how Thou teachest Thy faithful to reverence with peculiar honor some one or another of those servants who, thanks to their merits, have gone to Thee."

The sisters by her bedside, startled at her loud words, asked her to whom she was speaking. "Do you not see," she answered, "those most holy virgins, Saints Catherine and Cecilia, are approaching?" And then, turning to them, she exclaimed, "Now I come, my ladies, now I come." And so, bidding good-bye to all around her, at the hour she had foretold, she departed to God. At the very same time a light from heaven lit up the place her sacred remains lay and illuminated the whole town, while a rich fragrance of priceless perfume told that the Only-begotten Son of the Father of lights had been there, whose name, like ointment poured out, fills the whole world.

As evidence that St. Frideswide was living even after death, a wealthy man, whose frame was paralyzed and whose speech was gone, was brought in his servant's arms to the bier whereon she lay. The moment he touched it he was healed and, leaping up with a loud voice, told the praises of God and the saint.

When, amidst a great throng, her holy remains were being borne to the grave, a man whose lower members were so contracted that he could only crawl along, with his hands resting on little stools, dragged himself as best he could to the funeral. But as he could not reach the bier, nor get into the church when the body was carried there, because of the crowd, he did what remained to him. He cried out to the saint as though she were still alive: "O maiden of priceless holiness, O spouse of the Fount of Mercy, how long I have been wishing



to come to thee but, wretched as I am, my ills of body and soul have hindered my drawing near! Because of my sins, it has not been granted me to see thee either alive or dead. Yet, lady, turn thy compassionate heart to me and heal me from this illness. For I believe for certain this is very easy for thee now that thou hast deserved to go to Him to Whom nothing is impossible.

His cry drew the eyes of all upon him. Suddenly, with a loud crack, the contracted sinews became free and his legs became strong. Up he rose and, free from all pain and filled with joy, he took up his supports and, pushing through the crowd, threw himself down at the saint's tomb. Casting down there his supports, he thanked God and His glorious servant, St. Frideswide. So the sorrow of all was changed into gladness when it was seen what wonders God wrought through His servant after her death.

The body was laid in the Church of the Ever-

spotless Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, on the south side near the Thames.

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Baring-Gould adds:

The Monastery of St. Frideswide, transformed into a college, is now Christ Church. Her church, rebuilt in the twelfth century, is the cathedral of that city. Her holy relics are yet there, but tragically desecrated by a Calvinist commissioner of Queen Elizabeth, who mingled with them the bones of a disveiled nun who had married a renegade priest. He completed his blasphemy by placing them together in a stone coffin on which he engraved the words, now happily effaced, "Thus, perhaps, it pleased God that she who confessed Him even at the risk of her life should suffer insult for His sake even in her repose."

[S. Baring-Gould, *Lives of the Saints*, vol. 12 [Edinburgh: John Grant, 1914], pp. 484-487.) *A liturgical service in honor of St. Frideswide* was published in *Living Orthodoxy* #173.

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## SHOULD THE CHURCH BE IN STEP WITH THE TIMES?

*Archbishop Averky*

In a time when under the name of Christianity, even Orthodox Christianity, every kind of compromise and surrogate is offered men whose spiritual hunger can be satisfied only by uncompromising Truth, the spiritual shepherds have become few who speak straightforwardly the saving word. Archbishop Averky, Abbot of Holy Trinity Monastery at Jordanville, New York, and a leading hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, was one of these few. In the pages of the Russian religious newspaper published by the Monastery, *Orthodox Russia*, his voice was continually heard, calling for faithfulness to Holy Orthodoxy and warning of the impending judgment of God on this evil generation. [— ed.]

*"Know that we must serve,  
not the times, but God."*

—St. Athanasius the Great,  
Letter to Dracontius

IN STEP WITH THE TIMES! — Behold the watchword of all those who in our time so intensely strive to lead the Church of Christ away from Christ, to lead Orthodoxy away from true confession of the Orthodox Christian Faith. Perhaps this watchword does not always nor with everyone resound so loudly, clearly, and openly — this, after all, might push some away! The important thing is the practical following of this watchword in life, the striving in one way or another, in greater or lesser degree and measure, to put it into practice.

Against this fashionable, "modern" watchword, perilous to souls however it may be proclaimed or however put into practice, openly or under cover, we cannot but fight — we who are faithful sons and representatives of the Russian Church Abroad, the whole essence of whose ideology, in the name of which it exists in the world, is not to be "in step with the times," but to preserve an unchanging faithfulness to Christ the Savior, to the true Orthodox Christian Faith and Church.



Let us recall how the Blessed Metropolitan Anthony, founder and first head of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, in his remarkable essay, *How does Orthodoxy differ from the Western Denominations?* [SJKP leaflet #2305] wrote concerning the profound difference between our Faith and heterodoxy. He finds this profound difference in the fact that the Orthodox Faith teaches how to construct life according to the demands of Christian perfection, whereas heterodoxy takes from Christianity only those things which are, and to the degree to which they are, compatible with the conditions of contemporary cultural life. "Orthodoxy looks upon Christianity as the eternal foundation of true life and demands of everyone to force himself and his life until he attains this standard; whereas heterodoxy looks upon the foundations of contemporary cultural life as an unshakable fact. Orthodoxy demands moral heroism — *podvig*; heterodoxy searches for what in Christianity would be useful to us in our present conditions of life. For Orthodox man, called to eternity beyond the grave, where true life begins, the historically-formed mechanism of contemporary life is an insubstantial phantom; whereas for the heterodox the teaching concerning the future life is a lofty, ennobling idea, an idea which helps one ever better to construct real life here."

These are golden words, indicating for us clearly and sharply the truly bottomless abyss that separates genuine Christian faith — Orthodoxy — from its mutilation — heterodoxy! In the one is to be found ascetic labor (*podvig*), a turning to eternity; in the other, a strong attachment to the earth, a faith in the progress of mankind on earth.

Further, as Metropolitan Anthony so sharply and justly sets forth, "the Orthodox Faith is an ascetic faith," and "the blessed state which the worshippers of the 'superstition of progress' (to use the felicitous expression of S. A. Rachinsky) expect on earth, was promised by the Savior in the future life; but neither the Latins nor the Protestants desire to reconcile themselves to this, for the simple reason — to speak frankly — that they poorly believe in the resurrection and strongly believe in happiness in the present life, which, on the contrary, the apostles call a vapor that shall vanish away [Jas 4:14]. This is why the pseudo-Christian West does not wish and is unable to

understand the renunciation of this life by Christianity, which enjoins us to fight, having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new man, that is renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him Who created him [Col 3: 9-10].

"If we investigate all the errors of the West," Vladika Anthony writes further, "both those which have entered into its doctrinal teaching and those present in its morals, we shall see that they are all rooted in a failure to understand Christianity as ascetic labor (*podvig*) involving the gradual self-perfection of man."

"Christianity is an ascetic religion," concludes this excellent, forcefully and perspicaciously-written essay. "Christianity is a teaching of constant battling with the passions, of the means and conditions for the gradual assimilation of virtues. These conditions are both internal — ascetic labors — and given from without — our dogmatic beliefs and grace-bestowing sacramental actions, which have one purpose: to heal human sinfulness and raise us to perfection."

And what do we see now in contemporary "Orthodoxy" — the "Orthodoxy" that has entered into the so-called "Ecumenical Movement". We see the complete negation of the above-cited holy truths; in other words: renunciation of true Orthodoxy in the interest of spiritual fusion with the heterodox West. The "Orthodoxy" that has placed itself on the path of "Ecumenism" thinks not of raising contemporary life, which is constantly declining with regard to religion and morals, to the level of the Gospel commandments and the demands of the Church, but rather of "adapting" the Church herself to the level of this declining life.

This path of actual renunciation of the very essence of Holy Orthodoxy — ascetic labor, for the purpose of uprooting the passions and implanting the virtues — was taken in their time by the partisans of the so-called "Living Church" or "Renovated Church". This movement immediately spread from Russia, which had been cast down into the dust by the ferocious atheists, to other Orthodox countries as well. Still fresh in our memory is the "Pan-Orthodox Congress" convened by Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios IV of sorry memory in 1923, at which were devised such "reforms" as a married episcopate, remarriage of priests, the abolition of monasticism



and the fasts, abbreviation of divine services, suppression of special dress for clergy, *etc.*

Notwithstanding the collapse at that time of these impious designs, the dark powers were not, of course, pacified, and continued from that time their obstinate and perseverant activity, finding for themselves obedient tools in the ranks of the hierarchy of various Local Orthodox Churches. At the present time also, by the allowance of God, they have attained great success: almost all the Local Orthodox Churches have already entered into the “Ecumenical Movement,” which has set as its purpose the abolition of all presently-existing churches — including, of course, the Orthodox Church — and the establishment of some kind of absolutely new “church” which will be completely “in step with the times,” having cast away as useless rags, as something “obsolete” and “behind the times,” all the genuine foundations of true Christianity, and first of all, of course, asceticism, this being the indispensable condition for the main purpose of Christianity: the uprooting of sinful passions and the implanting of Christian virtues.

We have before us, as an example, an official document of this sort, belonging to the Local Church of Serbia: the journal *Theology*, published by the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Belgrade (8<sup>th</sup> year, issues 1 and 2 for 1964). In this journal we find a lead article literally entitled: “The Necessity for the Codification and Publication of a New Collection of Canons of the Orthodox Church.” The author of this article, while cunningly affirming that “the ideal principles of the Church will remain everywhere and always unchanging,” nonetheless attempts to prove that the collection of canons of the Orthodox Church is only the product of a time long since passed into eternity, and therefore that it does not answer to the demands of contemporary life and must be abolished and replaced by another. This new collection of canons, observe, “must be brought into agreement with the fundamental principles of life,” with which the Church supposedly “has always reckoned.” “Our time,” says this cunning author, “is different in many respects from the time of the Ecumenical Councils, at which these canons were composed, and therefore these canons cannot now be applied.”

Let us look now and see precisely which canons it is that this modernist author considers obsolete and subject to abrogation:

— The 9<sup>th</sup> canon of the Holy Apostles, which demands that the faithful, after entering church, should remain at the Divine service to the end, and should not cause disorder by walking about the church.

— The 80<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Trullo, which punishes clergy by deposition, and laymen with excommunication, for failure to attend church for three successive Sundays without some important reason.

— The 24<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Trullo, which prohibits clergy and monks from visiting race tracks and other entertainments; to this canon the author adds the entirely naïve, strange remark that it was only in earlier times that such amusements were places of depravity and vice, while now they are supposedly “centers of culture and education.”(!)

— The 54<sup>th</sup> canon of the Holy Apostles, which prohibits clergy, without unavoidable necessity, from entering a tavern; here again it somehow seems that previously the tavern was some different kind of establishment from what it is now.

— The 77<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Trullo and the 30<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Laodicea, which prohibit Christian men from bathing together with women; why it is necessary to acknowledge these canons too as “obsolete” is completely incomprehensible!

The 96<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Trullo, which condemns artificial curling of the hair and in general all adornment of oneself with various kinds of finery “for the enticement of unstable souls” — instead of “adorning oneself with virtues and with good and pure morals;” this canon in our times, it would seem, has not only not become “obsolete,” it has become especially imperative, if we call to mind the indecent, shameless women’s fashions of today, which are completely unsuitable for Christian women.

This is sufficient for us to see what purpose it is that the aforementioned “reform” in our Orthodox Church has in view, with what aim there is proposed the convocation of an Eighth Ecumenical Council, about which all “modernists” so dream, already having a foretaste of the “carefree life” that will then be openly permitted and legitimized for all!



But let us reflect more deeply upon what is the terrible essence of all these demands for the abrogation of supposedly “obsolete” canonical rules. It is this: these contemporary church “reformers” who now so impudently raise their heads even in the bosom of our Orthodox Church itself (and terrible to say, their number includes not merely clergy, but even eminent hierarchs!) accept contemporary life with all its monstrous, immoral manifestations as an unshakable fact (which is, as we have seen above, not at all an Orthodox, but a heterodox, Western conception!), and they wish to abrogate all those canonical rules which precisely characterize Orthodoxy as an ascetic faith that calls to ascetic labor, in the name of the uprooting of sinful passions and the implanting of Christian virtues. This is a terrible movement, perilous for our Faith and Church; it wishes to cause, in the expression of Christ the Saviour, the salt to lose its savor; it is a movement directed toward the overthrow and annihilation of the true Church of Christ by means of the cunning substitution for it of a false church.

The above-mentioned article in the Serbian theological journal is still discreet, refraining from complete openness. It speaks of the permissibility in principle of marriage for bishops, but in life we hear ever more frequent and persistent talk of far worse — namely, of the supposed inapplicability in our times of all those canonical rules which demand of candidates to the priesthood and of priests themselves a pure and unblemished moral life; or, to speak more simply, of the permissibility for them of that terrifying depravity into the abyss of which contemporary mankind more and more plunges itself.

It is one thing to sin and repent, knowing and acknowledging that one is sinning and is in need of repentance and correction of life. It is something else again to legitimize lawlessness, to sanction sin, lulling thus one’s conscience and thus abolishing the very foundations of the Church. To this we have no right, and it is a most grievous crime before God, the Holy Church, and the souls of the faithful who seek eternal salvation.

And for how long, to what limits may we permit ourselves to go on such a slippery path, abrogating the Church canons which uphold Christian morality? Right now in America and, as we hear, in places

also in other countries which have accepted contemporary “culture,” there is increasing propaganda for the official abrogation of marriage and the legalization in place of marriage of “free love”; the use of contraceptive pills is being sanctioned for married couples, and even for the unmarried, since marriage supposedly has as its purpose not the procreation of children, but “love”; legal recognition is being prepared for the heinous, unnatural passion of homosexuality, all the way to the establishment for homosexuals of a special church wedding rite (proposal of an Anglican bishop); *etc., etc.*

And so? Should our Church too follow this fashionable path — “in step with the times,” so as not to be left behind the march of life? But what kind of “church” will this be that will allow itself all this, or even merely look at it with all-forgiving condescension? It will be no longer a church at all, but a veritable Sodom and Gomorrah, which will not escape, sooner or later, the terrible chastisement of God.

We must not allow ourselves to be deluded and deceived, for we do not need such a “church,” or rather “false church.” We may ourselves be weak, and feeble, and we may often sin, but we will not allow the Church canons to be abrogated, for then it will become necessary to acknowledge the very Gospel of Christ, by which contemporary men do not wish to live, as “obsolete,” as “not answering to the spirit of the times,” and abrogate it!

But the Gospel of Christ, together with all the canons of the Church, as well as the Church ordinances, outline for us that Christian ideal toward which we must strive if we desire for ourselves eternal salvation. We cannot allow a lowering of this ideal for the gratification of sinful passions and desires, a blasphemous abuse of these holy things.

Whatever “reforms” all these contemporary criminal “reformers” may desire, the truly-believing Orthodox Church consciousness cannot acknowledge or accept them. And whatever the apostates from true Orthodoxy, from the ascetic Faith, may do, we will not allow the modernization of our Church, and we will NOT go “in step with the times”!

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## **ST. DANIEL OF THASSOS**

### **WHOM THE HOLY CHURCH CELEBRATES ON SEPTEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>**

Our righteous father Daniel was born during the reign of Constantine Copronymus, who ruled between 741-774. He was a contemporary of St. Ioannikios, whose disciple he became, when the latter came to Thassos and drove out the snakes that bit the residents of the island, as is told in his life. He was born of pious parents who always cared about the Faith and the Church. He was instructed in the statutes of God and was as a tree that was planted by the waters, as said the prophet, indicating how much he would progress later. In time he gave forth fruit in abundance which was good to the taste.

From childhood he practiced temperance as the first foundation, and prudence. Fasting and restraining the body's passions with perseverance and defeating the habit of anger with humility, he succeeded in dominating all the other passions with their opposite virtues, rendering them obedient to the soul. His greatest aspiration was to renounce the world and its wants and to bear the light yoke of the Lord according to the Gospel. He wandered about in the pristine areas of the island seeking an ideal spot to find rest. Finding a cave in a distant setting, he entered alone and communicated with God alone, praying ceaselessly and living on wild herbs and the tender shoots of trees. However, it is not right that a lamp be hidden under a bushel and not be seen by anyone. So it was with this God-bearing father. His virtue could not remain unknown to the end.

Many people heard of Daniel and his way of life and his superhuman accomplishments in that wilderness and many were those who went to visit him. They approached and pleaded with him that they might join him and become his disciples, allowing them to share his pains. The righteous one obeyed the divine instruction which states: "Him that cometh to me I shall not turn away." He accepted everyone without reservation. Later, more people came. The wilderness became a city full of habitations. With the contributions of the natives he built a monastery on the small island near Thassos across from the village of Potamias which is called Crambousa to this day. The foundations of the church can still be seen, as can many other buildings and medieval walls of the monastery.

It became a cœnobium and a preparatory school for souls, and many brethren converged there, not only from Thassos but also out of the adjacent shores on the mainland, as they heard of the fame and virtue of Saint Daniel. He shepherded them all and became a prime example by his becoming the cause of

salvation for many. Some of his disciples dwelt in the surrounding islets, and their leader was the righteous one. They chose the narrow and difficult road over every other secular desire. They withstood temptation here in this world only to achieve everlasting life, and now they rejoice with the other saints in heaven. Atop these small islets, traces of churches and cells survive to this day, attesting to this historical reality.

At that particular time the great St. Ioannikios went to Bulgaria; by his prayer alone he set free the Christians who were imprisoned there. On his return through Macedonia, he wished to go to the Mountania where was the great "agros" and also to Sygriane, to venerate the relics of Saint Theophanes of Sygriane. There also Saint Eubiotos was a solitary, as is told in his life.

It appears that Saint Ioannikios sailed to Thassos on a small boat. At that time the island was completely overrun by poisonous snakes, which caused many problems for the islanders. When the Thassians heard that Saint Ioannikios had come to their island, they all came out of their villages and fell at his feet, begging him to help them and save them from the awful scourge of the snakes. Saint Ioannikios, seeing their plight, made a prayer to God and suddenly, (lo! Thy wonders, O Lord!) the snakes came out of their nests, crept to the sea in droves and jumped in never to appear again.

Seeing this miracle, the people of Thassos thanked Saint Ioannikios as was meet and respected and honored him as an angel of God — above all, the righteous Daniel, who at the time was the superintendent of the monks there. He was never separated from Ioannikios, following him everywhere as much as he could. Daniel was planning to take one of his monks with him, who was the most dedicated, named Euthymius. But Ioannikios said to that monk: "Do not bother to come with us, brother. Prepare yourself and correct your life. For in a few days you shall go to the Lord." This actually happened. The good novice Euthymius was laid to rest in the Lord and inherited the eternal kingdom of Christ.

Our holy father Daniel went in the company of Saint Ioannikios to dwell in a deserted cave in which lurked a demon. The demon was terrifying in appearance and black and full of malice. The saints saw him but they were not disturbed, nor were they alarmed by his threats. The evil demon noticed that they were not shaken and would not turn away. So he turned into a serpent and coiled around the feet of Saint Daniel.



Then it bit Ioannikios on the side and caused him much pain. The latter lay bedridden for a week because of this and was speechless all the while. Afterwards the demon vanished and the righteous ones were no longer troubled by him, by the grace of God.

Following this, the great Ioannikios returned to the mountain of Trichalicos and told our righteous father Daniel to return to his flock, where it was necessary to shepherd his spiritual children, as he was their spiritual father. So he hearkened to him and returned to his monastery. When his students saw him they were most happy, for he always taught them to live with devotion, to have love for one another, and to show respect for the local bishop. At that time the island of Thassos was at the height of its progress. It had a city on its shores, a seaport, a local diocese with a resident bishop, and a defensive wall with towers. There were gold mines and marble quarries as is evidenced to this day by its deserted mines. Afterwards, because of barbaric invasions, it was destroyed and became as a body without life and a corpse

without beauty. There were also many solitaries in the numerous cells of the island. The righteous Daniel was their shepherd and overseer who led them and guided them to keep the commandments of God and to do all those things which are essential in the monastic life.

In those days the Church regained its stability and earlier glory by the grace of God, thanks to the pious queen Theodora and her son Michael who was most Orthodox. Then the great Ioannikios witnessed a vision and went to Constantinople with St. Arsakios in order to bolster the Faith and to reinstate the icons. Meanwhile our righteous father Daniel arrived at an advanced age and departed to the Lord. His students buried him in one of the islets according to his will. It bears his name, St. Daniel on the islet of Thassos, to the glory of God. To Whom be glory and power unto the ages. Amen.

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## A CONCERNED VOICE FROM THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD UNDER THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE (ROCOR/MP)

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This letter is a concerned voice from a soul who has always belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR). In 2001, the Synod of Bishops of ROCOR stated in an epistle that, *“During these days of universal apostasy, which, through the pan-heresy of ecumenism, has even infected most of the Local Orthodox Churches, we must stand united, that the enemy of our salvation may not use our divisions to destroy the voice of our confession in the homeland and the diaspora.”*<sup>1</sup> Sadly enough this voice of confession is not heard anymore. Instead, ROCOR/MP moves closer and closer toward the ecumenical Orthodox hierarchs and clergy, while rejecting the True Orthodox Christians, with whom we once confessed our unity. We promised to defend the Truth, but who reached out to support Vladyka Diomid in his lonely fight for the Truth? Who spoke up against the un-Christian World Summit of Religious Leaders in Moscow in 2006? Why are our spiritual leaders silent? It is well-known that the Moscow Patriarchate together with World Orthodoxy participates in the ecumenical movement. It is also well known that the Moscow Patriarchate still believes in the salvific act of the Declaration of 1927. And still our hierarchs state that ROCOR, under His Eminence Metropolitan Agafangel, together

with all other True Orthodox Churches who have walled themselves off *“during these days of universal apostasy”* are outside the Church and their sacraments invalid. How can this be when we ourselves just recently confessed our unity with them? We are canonical and in the Church. That is our main argument. And yet, the soul is in dire agony, feeling that something is completely wrong. Fr. Seraphim Rose explains it the following way: *“The apostasy of our times, to a degree unique in Christian history, is proceeding not primarily by false teachings or canonical deviations, but rather by a false understanding of Orthodoxy on the part of those who may even be perfectly Orthodox in their dogmatic teaching and canonical situation. A correct ‘Orthodoxy’ deprived of the spirit of true Christianity—this is the meaning of Sergianism, and it cannot be fought by calling it a ‘heresy,’ which it is not, nor by detailing its canonical irregularities, which are only incidental to something much more important.”*<sup>2</sup> Obviously, apostasy is not only a deviation from the canons, but first of all a deviation from the spirit of Orthodoxy. Besides the example of Sergianism, one can also mention the New Calendar. Neither of these two can, strictly speaking, be considered heresies. And yet we know very well the damage they have both caused the Orthodox Church.



Canonicity and apostasy can and do, therefore, easily go hand in hand. Today obedience is no longer understood as a God-pleasing obedience to Christ and His Church, but rather as a complete submission to Church authority, regardless of its teaching. Salvation is no longer attained by following the conscience of the Church of Christ and one's own conscience, but by blind obedience to the official Church authorities. To be, not in the Church of Christ, but in today's World Orthodoxy, has become the absolute criterion for salvation. These Church authorities are, therefore, not interested in believers who follow their conscience according to the conscience of the Church.

We are not only asked not to think, but *made* not to think. In the Church of Christ, though, there can be no violence on the conscience. Such violence breaks people morally and creates a spiritual apathy, depriving them of the ability to freely and truly follow Christ. Every Christian must follow his conscience, should it be even unto death. One, though, must do so in a truly Orthodox manner with Christian love, humility and moderation. We must try to understand that most of the believers, who are not following World Orthodoxy, are acting by their own conscience and the conscience of the Church. Seeing that World Orthodoxy does not have the correct and saving confession of the faith, many sober and pious faithful have walled themselves off not from the Church of Christ but from apostasy. The Old Calendar Movement is therefore not a heresy, neither is it a schism, but a walling off from falsehood. Having accepted the position of the official Church leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate and World Orthodoxy, together with their spirit of apostasy and conformism, the spiritual leaders of ROCOR/MP have not only compromised themselves in the saddest way, but have also deeply disappointed many of its faithful, as well as many of our pious brothers and sisters inside the Moscow Patriarchate and World Orthodoxy itself, who expected to see this Champion of Truth courageously expose all falsehood. The pain of witnessing this fall is intensified even more when one is asked to accept it as a glorious victory. The tragedy of ROCOR/MP, therefore, is not so much its formal union with the

Moscow Patriarchate and World Orthodoxy, but its wholehearted acceptance of their path and spirit. If our Christian life is to be truly pleasing to God, both a Christian loving heart and a true confession of Faith must be present. It is not only a question of *where*, but also of *how* one confesses his faith. Without a Christian loving and humble heart, one's "confession of Faith" will have no justification in the eyes of God, but will only harm himself and the sacred unity of the Church. On the other hand, if we reject the salvific Truths, Traditions and spirit of the Church, or perhaps just indifferently follow along, then that will equally endanger our salvation. Both extremes lack the "*spirit of true Christianity*," the divine Love of God and should be avoided. Apostasy, therefore, is simply the deviation from the Royal Path of Christian love towards God and man manifested in heresies and the lack of the spirit of true Christianity. We observe that World Orthodoxy is getting more and more infected by "*the pan-heresy of ecumenism*," estranging itself from the spirit of Christianity, while preserving the outward forms of the Church. This has been prophesied by the Holy Fathers and Holy Scripture and the process began a long time ago. That is why many pious Orthodox Christians are quietly stepping aside, in order to protect themselves. Many faithful in World Orthodoxy itself are also slowly beginning to lose patience. This letter is a concerned and quiet voice. Such voices, though, are labeled as proud, rebellious and full of self-deceit. World Orthodoxy has taken its course. It is a course based on the wide path of love for this world. It is not the narrow path of the Cross and it is not a path which should be followed.

Monk Theophan; Holy Trinity Monastery,  
Jordanville, NY USA  
SS Cyprian and Justina  
October 2/15, 2010

<sup>1</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, "Epistle of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church," 2001, #126, vol. XXI #6, p.26

<sup>2</sup> Andreyev, Ivan: *Russia's Catacomb Saints: Lives of the New Martyrs*; Saint Herman of Alaska Press, Platina, California, 1982, p. 257

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We must then die to the devil, and live unto God; depart from evil-doing, that we might rise again to righteousness. Let the past be buried, that a new life may rise up. And since, as Truth Itself tells us, "No man can serve two masters" [Matt 6:24], let our Master be the Lord, Who has lifted up the fallen to glory, not that other who has brought those who stood upright to ruin.

— St. Leo the Great  
Pope of Rome, † A.D. 461



## FR. LEV LEBEDEV ON “DIALOGUE”

A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE ARCHPRIEST LEV LEBEDEFF

On Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 1998, clergy and faithful members of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia were shocked to learn of the sudden death of one of the most outstanding theological writers of our times, Archpriest Lev Lebedeff. Fr. Lev had flown from his home in Kursk to New York at the Metropolitan's request to address the Bishops' Council which was due to meet the following week. Shortly after his arrival at the Synod headquarters in New York City he went to his room to rest and died in his sleep.

Although these documents are “old”, they are by no means out of date. Indeed, they are just as pertinent today as when written nearly twenty years ago, and in some ways perhaps even more so. They are of such importance that they deserve to be published in a “permanent” form, not to be deleted in the rewriting of history. [— *ed.*]

To His Holiness, The All-Holy Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Alexey II, and Members of the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate

From a “laid-off” clergyman of the  
Kursk-Belgorod Diocese,  
Archpriest Lev Lebedeff

*A reply to the “Epistle of the Local Council:  
‘To the Pastors, Honorable Monks and Nuns,  
and ALL Faithful Children  
of the Russian Orthodox Church’”*

Your Holinesses, Respected Archpastors:

The “Epistle of the Local Council,” which was printed in *Moscow Church Herald*, No. 13, 1990, was addressed to “all faithful children,” *i.e.*, in part, to me, which means that it is possible for me to reply; which I make bold to do, and send to you. In particular, I will speak to that part of the epistle which refers to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (henceforth, the Russian Church Abroad).

I know that many of you, reading my reply, will say, “but the same is true of you, Fr. Lev.” I want to emphasize that in this reply I am not discussing the moral sins of any hierarchy, but the ecclesiastical posture of the Moscow Patriarchate. In the history of the Church, there have been times when, to the defense of Orthodoxy, came not only holy and righteous people, but also sinners like me.

As is generally known, the epistle, overall and what was said specifically about the Russian Church Abroad, was not written on the initiative of the Local Council, and not all the members of the Council agreed with it.

Here is more proof that this particular council was not free, but subservient and consciously compromised, as has been every council held during the past 70-year period of Russian history. Therefore, we should have gotten used to this. And some already have. But...no. At the beginning of “perestroika” and “democratization” and “glasnost”, we started to have the illusion, and the hope, that our church councils would represent the actual thoughts and wishes of the Russian Orthodox Church, not the secret directives of administrative bodies outside of the church.

Moreover, finally one can raise objections to the Council in general, without singling out sections of the epistle, insofar as the latter throughout reflects the overall intentions of the upper echelons of the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate, because the initiative for the epistle came from them. Therefore, in my reply, I will utilize the notion of an “inner circle” within the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate. To it I address my reply.

This “inner circle” begins its reproaches in its address to the Russian Church Abroad with the assertion that the latter “is not in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, nor any other local Orthodox Church.” It is interesting to know — why not? You yourselves, respected archpastors, very well know — why not? Why not tell the people candidly? Not far below, I will attempt to fill in this blank.



But for now, let's begin with what the authors of the section of the epistle at hand are saying — that there are two churches: the Moscow Patriarchate; and the Russian Church Abroad, which is trying to establish parishes “on the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate.” It seems that to take such a stance comes either from incredible stupidity, or incredible hypocrisy and Pharasaism.

We don't have, and we never had, two Russian Orthodox Churches. There always was, and is, and will be, the one-and-only Russian Orthodox Church. In connection with the well-known historical (and canonical) circumstances following the “Declaration” of Metropolitan Sergey (Strogorodsky) in 1927, the Church within the borders of the fatherland came under the supervision of one church administration, and the Church Abroad, under another. Within our fatherland's borders, there was the Moscow Patriarchate, whose hierarchy declared itself to be in accord with the open enemies of God, separated itself from Holy Orthodoxy, and since 1960 has entered into heresy, inasmuch as it has accepted the ideology and practices of the ecumenical movement, as promoted by the protestant World Council of Churches.

The Russian Church Abroad, led by its holy Synod and its First Hierarch (currently, Metropolitan Vitaly), has remained in the fundamentals of Holy Orthodoxy, and is preserving in purity both Orthodox teaching and the Church canons, not at all accepting ecumenism and modernism, to say nothing of making compromises with atheists. From this it is clear what any Orthodox person — a child of the Russian Orthodox Church — both he living abroad and he within the bounds of the Fatherland — would himself freely choose; which of these he would choose to rule the Church and to subject himself to.

There's where the truth is to be found! And it is perfectly proper that the Russian Church Abroad has finally been given the possibility of accepting all those who wish to come under the spiritual/canonical authority of its hierarchy.

The higher echelons of the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate are accusing the Russian Church Abroad, as if by its actions it were creating

a “schism” and rift within the “canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate,” dramatically cautioning all of us with the words of the apostle to avoid the bringers of divisions and temptations, and citing also the “holy canons” of the Church. God is righteous! Shouldn't the high hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate be ashamed to speak of “schism” and “holy canons”?

Will you, archpastors of the Moscow Patriarchate, speak of schism, when it is precisely you who instigated this schism, when you blessed the communist regime (which showed itself not even to be “communist”) as the way to the “bright future”; and afterwards introduced the heretical ideology of ecumenism? Will you speak of “schism”, when you yourselves have already made a schism, rending the Robe of Christ, by setting up the Ukrainian and Belorussian Orthodox Churches in the very bosom of what was the single Russian Orthodox Church (or Church of the Moscow Patriarchate), which in and of itself was the basis of the division of a single race into three fraternal Slavic peoples?

Should you be reminding others of the “holy canons” of the Church, when you have knowingly violated many canons out of fear of reprisals, and have expelled from your ranks and from the Church those who forbade joining together in prayer with heretics; and have participated in so-called “ecumenical prayers”?

I won't divert your attention to the consideration of the canonical rules. And I won't demonstrate to you that ecumenism is the “heresy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”, as this has already been clearly and exhaustively demonstrated by one of the most prominent theologians in contemporary Orthodoxy, Archimandrite Justin Popovich (*cf.* his book, *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, Solunh, 1974), and by the wonderful American Orthodox ascetic, Hieromonk Seraphim (*cf.* his book, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, Platina, Calif., 1979), and by many other faithful Orthodox.

In general, you should not speak of “holy canons”, when you have often, openly disclaimed their divine inspiration, regarding them as merely historical — rules of human discipline; keeping steadfastly one type only out of them all: absolute



obedience to the bishop. It is not for you, higher bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate, to talk about canons, when some of you (with the consent of all) have bound yourselves up in government service, and take the greatest delight in being allowed to sit in the highest “organ” of Soviet government, underneath the canopy of red cloth with its pentagrams and hammers and sickles, and the likeness of the bald-headed leader — which is the ensign of the ideo-political criminals in the 20th century.

Maybe from your point of view, all of these things can be fit into the frame of reference of “differing theological approaches” (to what?! to whom?!), but what about “differences of opinion” with the texts of Apostle Paul? All of you theologically erudite people, you’ve all read the writings of Apostle Paul. Is it for me to remind you what he says about heretics, how they must be separated from us (in addition to those who foster “schism and temptations”)?

And even worse are your shameful, apparently hypocritical words in the epistle, when you, the highest level of the Moscow Patriarchate, call to remembrance the “blood of the martyrs and tears of the confessors,” which have bathed the much-suffering Russian land in the last 70 years.

For until the most recent times, you have obediently toed the line of the lying, atheistic propaganda, which said that there weren’t any martyrs for the faith: only political enemies of the Soviet regime. Even to date you have not glorified them in the choirs of the saints. But the Russian Church Abroad glorified these martyrs and confessors as early as 1981.

And here is the point of the epistle which most especially underscores the falsity of the whole audacious document. Not without a reason did it come

to be that the Church Abroad is not in communion with a single local Orthodox Church. The time has come for us to tell — why? None other than the Moscow Patriarchate, relying on the backing of the power of the Soviet government, demanded, with ultimata, in the councils of the local Orthodox Churches, the denial of the canonicity of communion with the Russian Church Abroad, as long as it remains separate from the Moscow Patriarchate. They don’t want to be united with them, and they are right! The Russian Church Abroad preferred to be left by itself, for the very reason that the other churches have gotten themselves caught up in the ecumenical movement, and worse things, besides.

Thereby, the Russian Church Abroad has been left, in fact, as the solitary stronghold of Holy Orthodoxy in the world: of the traditions and legacies of Holy Russia! Honor be to her, and praise! Because not to her, but to you, high pontiffs of the Moscow Patriarchate, do these words pertain: “the sin of causing a division in the single Body of Christ is not cleansed even by the blood of martyrdom.”

But aren’t you aware, you high bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate, don’t you know that we, the ordinary clergy and many simple believers, understand this clearly and see it? Or do you think that we are all idiots? I don’t think so.

I think the situation is a little different: being utterly absorbed in the lies of this world, you cannot keep from lying at every turn. You have the feet where the head should be; have proclaimed light darkness; lies truth, and have clearly shown to all of us, and the whole world, that you serve not Christ, but the devil, “for he is a liar, and the father of lies.”

— Archpriest Lev Lebedeff

June 21, 1990

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## **DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE: WHY AND HOW?**

*by Archpriest Lev Lebedeff*

### *I. What is Happening?*

Something that seems very strange at first sight! In our days within the bosom of the ROCA a move towards gradual rapprochement with the MP has made its appearance, admittedly, so far, just by way

of dialogue, and this notwithstanding the fact that to this day the MP has not renounced a single one of its fundamental principles, which for 71 years have made any dialogue with it impossible for the ROCA.



How is it that this move towards dialogue has been able to make its appearance now within the ROCA? People usually cite the fact that communism has collapsed in Russia and the MP has become “free”. But here it has also become clear that in these new “democratic” conditions the MP freely preserves everything that it has stood for since 1927, which is:

1. Serving, “not through fear, but as a matter of conscience,” the mighty ones of this world, whoever they may be, in the guise of serving Christ

(this is Sergianism);

2. The heresy of ecumenism, both as an ideology and as the practice of joint prayer with heretics, which subjects the Orthodox participants in such prayers to expulsion from their holy orders and excommunication from the Church;

3. Failure to recognize the Royal Martyrs and fully to recognize the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.

To this has now been added the scandalous commercial activity of the MP and its ties with the world of crime.

## II. Why?

Knowing and seeing all this, how is it possible for Russian members of the ROCA to seek dialogue with the MP? Some of the motivations for this were very clearly discerned and expressed by Vladika Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany. In his presentation to the “Round Table” (concerning the relations between the ROCA and the MP) at the beginning of 1996 he said that for certain Russians living outside Russia “national interests take priority over those relating to the Church.” These people want union (with the MP — *Fr. L*) only because they are Russian, or think that they are Russian... But this cannot take priority over the Church, or over the values of the Church. I can understand and share in this pain, pain for one’s people. But if this people is held in the clutches of a monster, which is swallowing it up, then I must try to tear away from it at least the hands and feet that I can grasp hold of...” (“Messenger (*Vestnik*) of the Diocese of Germany,” No. 2, 1996). These are magnificent words! They

perfectly express the position of the ROCA towards Orthodox people in Russia, who are truly being swallowed up by a monster, which has two paws — the atheistic government and the ever-compliant Moscow Patriarchate! In the same presentation, a little earlier, Vladika Mark gave this warning: “Our Orthodox Faith is not a dowry of Russianness. In the exaggeration of the national element there lurks a great danger for all the Orthodox Churches, where this element of nationalism can easily come to eclipse questions of faith.”

## III. Who Initiated It?

However, at the very same time, in 1996, a dialogue was already taking place in Germany under the direction of Archbishop Mark between the clergy of the Church Abroad and the bishop and clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate. In private conversations the same Archbishop Mark explained this as follows. Now the ROCA is encountering serious problems. Our Church is called Russian, but there are fewer and fewer Russians in it and the majority of our bishops are men of advanced years; we must keep the Church Russian, otherwise we will have to call it the Eskimo Church, or something else, which will be completely absurd. Here Vladika Mark emphasized that his education had instilled into him a love for Russia.

How these thoughts are to be reconciled with those quoted previously, which he himself expressed at the Round Table, can be explained by nobody other than Vladika Mark himself. A year later, in his official explanation of his new policy of dialogue with the MP, in his article “The strength of the Church is in the unity of faith and love” (*Vestnik of the Diocese of Germany*, No. 4, 1997), Vladika Mark completely confirmed what he had been saying in private conversations. Thus, answering his own question as to what unites us (with the Moscow Patriarchate) he wrote, “We are united by the people of God, which we have been ordained to shepherd and to lead along the path to salvation...” “We are all (*i.e.* the ROCA and the MP — *Fr. L*) responsible for the enlightenment of the once Orthodox Russian people, as well as for its descendants outside Russia, and also for those who have accepted the Orthodox faith as a result of the



missionary activities of Russian emigrants. Under these circumstances slandering the Church Abroad by declaring it to be “schismatic” does nothing to help the healing of the wounds of the Russian Church....”

Here, it seems, is the main reason why, despite everything, a bishop of the Church Abroad has entered into dialogue with those who are the source of this slander against the Church Abroad (*i.e.* with the slanderers): it is the “once Orthodox Russian people,” inasmuch as it supposedly “unites” the ROCA and the MP.

Here we must admit that we are faced with a predominance of the “national interest,” or “national element,” even though closely intertwined with the values of the Church. It cannot possibly be denied that people of non-Russian nationality can have a sincere love for Russia and the Russian people. But the question as to why, of all the bishops of the Russian Church Abroad, it is Vladika Mark who is the most concerned about preserving its Russianness and generally about the situation of the National Church, is one to which there is no satisfactory answer.

#### *IV. The People of the Church*

Vladika Mark chose his words well when he used the expression “the once Orthodox Russian people.” This expression presupposes that now the Russian people is not Orthodox. And this is quite true. So how can it unite the Orthodox Church? Let us look a little more closely at the actual state of affairs.

It is a long time since a Russian people united in the Orthodox faith and the Russian Church has existed in Russia. In the present conglomerate of Russian speaking population most people are atheists, but there are also fair numbers of Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, followers of Hare Krishna, Satanists, and Pagans. These are all ethnically Russian people, who are well aware of Orthodoxy, see Orthodox churches before their eyes and now have every opportunity to read from a wide array of edifying Orthodox literature, but consciously do not wish to be Orthodox. Neither the hierarchs of the MP, nor, certainly, the hierarchs of the ROCA can be “responsible” for

such people. The Church bears no responsibility for those who consciously remain outside the Church. So the supporters of dialogue with the MP cannot be referring to that “unchurched” part of the Russian-speaking population.

Certainly, another concept is also used in the aforementioned article by Vladika Mark — that of the “People of God.” One might suppose that this refers to the believing Orthodox people, the People of the Church.

The People of the Church outside Russia and in the bosom of the ROCA is the flock of the ROCA. The MP makes no claim to it, bears no responsibility for it, and can take an interest in it only with a view to creating a new schism in the ROCA. The People of the Church in Russia in the bosom of the MP is the flock of the MP. This flock has nothing whatever to do with its kinsmen after the flesh living outside Russia; this flock is completely faithful to the hierarchs of the MP and usually has a hostile attitude to the Church Abroad, or at best one of indifference. For this People of the Church in the bosom of the MP the bishops of the Church Abroad clearly cannot bear any responsibility. It is the MP that bears the responsibility.

So where is the “People of God” which “unites” the ROCA and the MP? Nowhere! Such a people simply does not exist; it is a myth, an illusion.

To add further clarification we must bear in mind that only in the 1920’s and 1930’s, when masses of the real, old, and therefore Orthodox, Russian People, brought up before the revolution, were still alive, although rapidly dying out in the repressions, and with them there were multitudes of real priests and many bishops faithful to Christ, although many of them were already in prisons and in exile; only then was it still possible to say that in Russia there was a People of the Church common to both the ROCA and the MP. But after 1945 there is no such people. The USSR became inhabited entirely by another, new, “Soviet people”. The part of it which had faith was also, with small exceptions, fundamentally also completely Soviet in nature, in everything except atheism; it was in accord with its “native” Soviet government, its “native” party, and with its “native” Patriarchate



which was at one with the party, and which to this day it considers to be its Mother Church.

#### V. *The Mother Church*

The concept of the “Mother Church” is also being used by the members of the ROCA who have begun dialogue with the MP. But with them this concept gives rise to complications and leads to unimaginable confusion and contradictions.

At first Archbishop Mark put forward an idea, or an image or metaphor, which we can recognize as a real contribution to our ecclesiastical thinking. In his Round Table presentation in 1996 mentioned above, describing our disagreements with the MP, he said, “We have clearly delineated the areas where we do not agree. One of them is what is known as Sergianism, *i.e.* that through which that part of the Russian Church, the MP, was conceived.” A year later, in his article “The strength of the Church is in the unity of faith and love” Vladika Mark wrote, “The Russian Orthodox Church is our common (with the MP — *Fr. L*) Mother Church; this goes without saying. However, by “Mother” we understand “that which gives birth.” The governing structures of the Moscow Patriarchate such as they have been from 1927 to the present in their relationship with the Russian Church Abroad cannot make any claim to be called the “Mother” which has given birth to it.”

In this extract it is not entirely clear why we are concerned only with the relationship of the MP’s governing structures with the ROCA, and not with Christ, and with God’s truth. But let us focus our attention on the most important aspect. The image, or metaphor, of conception and giving birth is very accurate and lets us see everything in its proper perspective. Using this excellent metaphor, we can clearly see that the Russian Church Abroad is the direct, natural continuation of its Mother, the Russian Orthodox Church, such as it was from the beginning in Russia up to the revolution and even up to 1927. And then the Moscow Patriarchate was truly “conceived” and “born” by what had fallen away from God’s truth and from the Mother Church — by Sergianism.

From this follows irrefutably what the Russian Church Abroad has always said — that the

Sergianist MP is not the continuation (or daughter) of the Mother Russian Orthodox Church, that the MP is a Bolshevik forgery of the Church. Consequently the ROCA and the MP do not have a common Mother Church. Their “Mothers” are different.

#### VI. *The Logic of the Dialogue*

But to make a declaration of this nature to the representatives of the MP participating in the dialogue would immediately make the dialogue impossible and meaningless. A “dialogue of love” requires playing at “equal rights”, requires that we recognize the other side as being just as “correct”, “valid”, *etc.* This is the inevitable logic of any ecumenical “dialogue of love”. So, once he had entered into the dialogue, Archbishop Mark inevitably found himself forced to submit to this purely ecumenical logic.

We cannot help noting that in the above-cited extract from the April 1997 article it is no longer said that the MP was “conceived” by Sergianism; it is said only that its “governing structures” cannot be called the “Mother Church”, which is synonymous with saying that the ROCA and the MP have one, common Mother Church.... However, this is still an almost imperceptible slide into the realm of untruth. The headlong rush into this realm took place in December 1997 and was vividly expressed in the joint “Declaration” of the participants in the 9<sup>th</sup> conference of representatives of the ROCA Diocese of Germany and representatives of the MP.

The untruth begins with the heading: “Declaration of the participants of the ninth conference of clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate and Church Abroad) on the territory of Germany.” So the heading immediately asserts what is supposed to be the ultimate conclusion of the dialogue: that the MP and the ROCA are one — one and the same Russian Orthodox Church. The heading further asserts that this is a conference of no more and no less than the entire Moscow Patriarchate and Church Abroad (on the territory of Germany). How pretentious and deceptive this is! The Primate and Synod of the ROCA had not empowered the clergy of the German Diocese to represent the whole Church



Abroad and express the opinion of the whole Church. The further one reads, the worse it becomes. It appears that the two sides have achieved “mutual understanding” and hope for a “fruitful broadening of the path on which we have set out.” What is the basis for this mutual understanding and these hopes? They are based on the following:

1. Archbishop Mark and his clergy recognize themselves as children of the one (together with the MP) Russian Church;

2. above all, “they recognize the positive (!) development of Church life” in the MP, — they recognize that the one Mother Church in its “spiritual foundations” “is manifested in the spiritual life both in Russia” (in vodka sales?) “and outside Russia”;

3. “they have agreed” and note that “the grace of the sacraments, priesthood and life of the Church (!!)

4. “They recognize the essential fullness of Church life” in the MP (despite its unshakable Sergianism, the ecumenical heresy, and the ties to the Mafia)!

Such are the fundamental ideas of the “Declaration.” And there is not a single word about the fact that the ROCA and the MP were “conceived” and “given birth to” by different “mothers”. However there is an admission that “the problems which still exist between us... do not constitute an absolute impediment to Eucharistic communion.”

What can you call all this? Let each reader choose the right word for himself.

### *VII. The Reasons for the Fall*

We have already pointed out one of the reasons for this headlong landslide into utter untruth: it lies in the logic of ecumenical “dialogue”. We cannot help recalling the explanation given by some of the fathers that the first mistake of our ancestor Eve was that she engaged in any conversation (dialogue!) at all with the serpent — the liar and slanderer (for he began immediately with a slander: “Is it really true that God has forbidden you to eat from every tree in Paradise?”). Vladika Mark, as we have seen, has also testified to the slander against the Church Abroad uttered by the MP. It must be said that notwithstanding the “conferences” on the territory

of Germany, the MP is continuing to utter its slanders among its own flock. But outside it, in “conferences” and “dialogues” in foreign territories the representatives of the MP wallowing in ecumenical ideology and psychology are always ready to recognize the “grace” and “fullness” of Church life not only in the ROCA, but in any group you like — in Christians of any confession, and now also with Moslems, Jews, Buddhists and pagans. For the MP such compromises of their conscience have long been commonplace in their multifarious “dialogues of love.” But how is it possible for educated and well-tried theologians of the Church Abroad to start following this same ecumenical path?

The answer to this can be traced to the very recognition of what is “ours” as being “yours” and what is “yours” as being “ours”. This immediately recalls Metropolitan Sergius’s “Declaration” of 1927. Even the formal motivation is the same — “saving the Church” (the Church Abroad) which is growing fewer both in its total numbers and in its numbers of ethnic Russians. It is not just for its own sake, but for the sake of the Church that our supporters of dialogue with the MP have entered into this inadmissible dialogue with its enemies. And once they started talking they have suddenly “seen the light” and come to realize that these people are not our enemies at all, but our “brothers”, members of the “same”, or even “one and the same” “Mother Church”.

Can it really be that Vladika Mark does not want to understand, or does not understand, what Sergianism is? It would seem that he really does not want to, or does not understand that which he openly admits. In his presentation to the Round Table in 1996 he said: “They (the representatives of the MP — *Fr. L.*) moved immediately from Patriarch Tikhon to Sergius and tried to explain all the actions of Metropolitan Sergius on the basis that Patriarch Tikhon had already laid out this path out beforehand. To a certain extent this is true, in fact to a larger extent than I had realized. (The MP has opened the eyes of a bishop of the ROCA who did not know Soviet history — *Fr. L.*). But fundamentally, it is not true. Where the line is to be drawn here, we have not yet clarified for ourselves, but I think that we are on the way towards it.



If we have still not clarified such an important question for ourselves, how can we enter into dialogue with the MP, which is more experienced in Sergianism and skilled in lies? It is hard to accept that such an admission of ignorance is correct. In the ROCA it has been clarified long ago based on fundamental principals where to draw the line between concessions and compromises, which were made by Patriarch Tikhon, and full scale fraternization with antichrist, in which Sergius engaged together with his unlawfully constituted synod.

Under pressure from the Bolsheviks Patriarch Tikhon certainly gave way within certain limits. Usually this is defined by the concept of simple civil loyalty to the Soviet government, which is to say, loyalty understood as renunciation of any political struggle against it, recognizing it as a competent civil authority. On this basis, in his famous “Statement” to the Supreme Court of the RSFSR of 16 June 1923, Patriarch Tikhon repented of his “acts against the state system” and wrote: “from henceforth I am not an enemy of the Soviet government.” But when he was later sadly asked why he had said this, his Holiness replied: “But I did not say that I was its (*i.e.* the Soviet government’s) friend.”

“Not an enemy, but yet not a friend,” — this was the formula for drawing the line. And Patriarch Tikhon stood firmly on this line and did not yield a further inch to his very death. It is well known and has long since been proved that Patriarch Tikhon’s so called “Testament” (“Testamentary Epistle”) of 1925 is a forgery, fabricated by Tuchkov. The Bolsheviks very much wanted the patriarch to issue this letter; they even wrote the text for him. But he did not issue it. He died!

In the 1927 “Epistle” or “Declaration” of Metropolitan Sergius (Stagorodsky) something immeasurably greater than simple “civil loyalty” to the Soviet regime is asserted. This is not simply a “crossing of the line” in the form of further concessions or heaping praise on the government, albeit false and hypocritical, but nevertheless explicable — *i.e.* it is not simply an “adaptation” as Vladika Mark calls it. The Declaration contains a deeply embedded renunciation of serving Christ on the part of Sergius and his unlawful Synod; and this in

order “not out of fear, but as a matter of conscience,” as he here expresses it, always to serve only the enemies of God or antichrists, in a spirit of complete unity with them! It was not enough for Sergius to say, “Your joys and successes are our joys and successes, and your failures are our failures” — he went on to enumerate the “blows” directed against the Soviet Union which he, Sergius, categorizes as “blows against us,” *i.e.* against his “church”: “The war, the boycott, any national disasters or simply murders like the one in Warsaw”. This murder in Warsaw was the murder by B. Koverdaya of the Bolshevik Voikoff (also known as Weiner), who was one of the principal organizers of the murder of the Imperial Family, which fact was well known then, in 1927. So Sergius let the Bolsheviks clearly understand that he and his entourage were at one with them in all their evil deeds up to and including regicide. This is how it later proved to be. And so it continues to this day. In the guise of serving Christ the MP, “not out of fear, but as a matter of conscience” serves the mighty ones of this world, whoever they may be, being always at one with them in everything.

So it is one thing not to resist (where this is impossible) the regime of antichrist, as something allowed by God, and quite another to enter into complete union with it, approving all the deeds and misdeeds of this regime, as if it were something blessed by God.

Is it really not clear where to draw the line here? The Bolsheviks, who were really just like werewolves (their words and slogans said one thing, but in practice everything was intentionally the opposite) tried not only to make the Church obedient, but to create a Church organization in its own image and likeness — in other words, also a werewolf, where in the guise of serving Christ it was really antichrist who would be served. And this is just what they did. But it was not through Patriarch Tikhon, but through Metropolitan Sergius. This is the very nature of the MP to this day, and it cannot change what it is.

This terrible nature of Sergianism and the MP was known and sensed by the ROCA from the very beginning. On this subject there is the very well known letter by Bishop Victor (Ostrovodoff) of Isha



written in October 1927 and published many times since, in which he defines the essence of Sergianism as expressed in the Declaration to be a “mockery and desecration of the Holy Orthodox Church,” as “renunciation of the Savior Himself,” and as “a sin no less than any heresy and schism, but in fact incomparably greater, since it casts a man directly into the pit of perdition.” This pit of perdition was “conceived” by the Moscow Patriarchate, not by the Russian Orthodox Church, with which the MP deceptively numbers itself, but from which it has really taken only its outer wrapping, its clothing — its mask.

Both this letter by Bishop Victor and a great multitude of other opinions by the most authoritative hierarchs and clergymen about Sergianism and the MP were very well known to our present supporters of dialogue with the MP. Just as they knew of the anathema against ecumenism, ecumenists and all who enter into communion with them which was proclaimed by the ROCA in 1983. So how could our conference participants, before the MP has renounced Sergianism and ecumenism, declare that the grace of the sacraments and the very life of the Church in the MP must not even be called into question and that they do not see any “absolute impediments to Eucharistic communion” between the ROCA and the MP?

### *VIII. The Sacraments*

If there are indeed no questions about the Church life of the MP, because it is not life, but a steady disintegration of Church life, then the presence of grace — the validity of the sacraments — of the MP always has been and still is very much in question!

On this question arguments among the Orthodox began in 1927 and continue to this day. There is the well known letter of 1934 by the holy Hieromartyr Metropolitan Kyrill (Smirnoff), in which he writes that the sacraments of the Sergianists are validly performed but they can be unto salvation only for people “who approach them with simplicity of heart, not suspecting anything untoward in the Sergian order of the Church.” For those who celebrate these sacraments, and also for those who know about their apostasy and

nevertheless, ignoring the truth, approach them, these sacraments are performed “unto condemnation”.

Apparently it is these thoughts that Archbishop Mark has in mind when he calls upon us to “look closely” at the “irreproachable ecclesiology” of Metropolitan Kyrill (*Messenger of the German Diocese*, No. 4, 1997). However, this ecclesiology is far from irreproachable; it received numerous “reproaches” even then, in the middle of the 1930’s. The Hieromartyr Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovykh) asserted the opposite: that no sacraments are performed by the Sergianists, that they are invalid. Many bishops in prisons and exile supported his point of view, as did all the bishops of the Catacomb Church of Russia. Finally, in 1937, shortly before his martyr’s death (by shooting) together with Vladika Joseph, Vladika Kyrill of Kazan wrote that since enough time had elapsed since the Declaration of 1927 and Sergius had shown no repentance, “the Orthodox have no part or lot with him.” Our hieromartyrs did not then know that the World War would take place, that the year 1943 would come when great multitudes of people in Russia would turn to God and to the Church out of fear, and Stalin would immediately make it possible for the Sergians to create a network of diocesan administration throughout the country, and to open up to 20,000 churches. The people who poured into these churches were to a large extent already “Soviet”; they knew nothing about the Declaration of 1927, and they were sincerely seeking Christ. Due to the speed with which this was being organized the Sergians were forced to appoint a good number of decent men as bishops, and these bishops conducted church affairs in the spirit not of Sergius, but of Patriarch Tikhon. Hence for many people the question of the validity of the sacraments in the MP again became — a question. The question became more acute when the heresy of ecumenism made its appearance in the MP in the 1960’s. In our days it is the subject of heated discussions among members of the ROCA in Russia. Opinions are divided: some take the position enunciated by Metropolitan Kyrill in 1934, while others take the position of Vladika Joseph and the Catacomb Church. There is no sign



of agreement. It is clear that only a special Council (Sobor) of the ROCA is competent, using the formulation "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us," to resolve this question, which is too complex a matter to be addressed by ordinary reason. So no group of members of the ROCA has the right to declare in the name of the whole Church that the grace of the sacraments of the MP "is not in question." It is! Just look at the questions!

Even if we accept Metropolitan Kyrill's 1934 ecclesiology it appears that in the MP the sacraments act not for salvation but for the condemnation both of the celebrants and for the great majority of those who know (and by now they know full well) of their apostasy and their heresies, and still receive the sacraments from them. Then even here there can be no Eucharistic communion between the ROCA and the MP, since communing with the members of the MP would mean partaking in their condemnation, and such communion would turn into a consuming fire for all eternity. Hence it follows that without trampling on his own conscience Archbishop Mark cannot, even from considerations of "diplomacy", recognize the "positive nature" and "fullness" of Church life in the MP.

#### *IX. Where is the Real Russian Church Now?*

The answer already seems clear. But on the way towards it stand some historical and canonical misconceptions which the supporters of rapprochement with the MP often latch on to, and which therefore need to be completely laid to rest.

Ever since 1921, in all its official documents the ROCA has declared itself to be just a "part" of the Church of Russia, temporarily self-governing in the conditions of the Diaspora, until the fall of the Bolshevik regime in Russia. This was completely correct until 1937 — *i.e.* during the period when many real Russian bishops were still alive, not having recognized Sergianism, in prisons and exile, and also, as we have said above, a significant part of the genuine Orthodox Russian people was still alive, and consequently there was still hope that if, at that time, the Bolshevik regime were to fall, the ROCA would immediately unite with the liberated bishops and the liberated Orthodox in Russia, Sergius and his unlawful "synod" created by the

Bolsheviks would be condemned and abolished, and the Russian Church would again attain to full unity.

But what happened was different. All the non-Sergianist bishops had been physically destroyed by the end of 1937. By 1945 in other ways the entire genuinely Orthodox people had also been destroyed. What replaced it was the "Soviet" people that had been artificially cultivated since 1918, the believers among which, with minor exceptions, were already completely faithful to the Sergianist pseudo-patriarchate, as to their "Mother Church".

Once this situation had come about the view of the ROCA as "part" of the Russian Church was already incorrect, or not entirely correct, if we take into account the fact that the ROCA really perceived her unity as being with the catacomb communities in the USSR. In our days, and most especially since the MP fell further into the blatant heresy of ecumenism in the 1960's, and since by the middle of the 1970's the few remaining people brought up before the revolution had all departed this earthly life, the view of the ROCA as a "part" of the Russian Church has become completely incorrect.

Now the ROCA is not a "part", but the one and only lawful Russian Orthodox Church in all its fullness! In full unity with it are those communities in Russia which have united to her of their own free will since 1990, as well as those few catacomb communities which joined it once their canonical basis had been clearly established. The reason for this situation, paradoxical though it appears at first, has already been pointed out. The ROCA naturally preserves and is a continuation of everything that was supported in Russia by the Orthodox Church (the Mother Church) up to 1917 and even up to 1927.

The MP bears no relationship to this Mother Church since, as we have already said, it was "conceived" and given birth to by Sergianism in its betrayal of Christ; this is the "Mother" of the MP. And if sacraments are still celebrated in the MP, then this is God's mercy to those simple souls, who alas are very few, who go to the churches of the MP, "not suspecting anything untoward," as if to Christ Himself.



“The Church is not tied to a particular place,” said Patriarch Nikon in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is not, we would add, a Church of a geographic territory. The Church is first and foremost the believing people lead by its bishops and clergy. So wherever Russian people of the Church live by the tenets of the Russian Church such as it was from the beginning up to 1927, there is the Russian Orthodox Church in all its fullness of grace.

However, as a result of a certain mental inertia, as well as understandable patriotic feelings, many Russians outside Russia have still not yet grasped what has happened, and still will not believe that the genuine Russian Church and Russian people, with the exception of the few communities mentioned above, no longer exists in Russia, and so they cling on to their conception of the ROCA as a “part” of the Church of Russia.

It is precisely this inertia, incomprehension and naïve patriotism which are now being exploited by the supporters of dialogue and rapprochement with the MP, while they also draw inspiration and open support in their efforts from the cunning MP.

They attempt to pass off their wrong action as something holy and make haste in advance to insure themselves by asserting that it is only the “enemy of our salvation” and also certain anonymous “forces” that are interested in deepening the confrontation between the ROCA and the MP. Even people with a sincere zeal for Orthodoxy can, in the view of Archbishop Mark, involuntarily become tools of these “hostile forces”.

A very feeble defense! We can and, it would seem, we must say to Archbishop Mark: “Respected Vladika, there are far more enemies of our salvation and various “forces”, both open and secret, whose interest is first and foremost in destroying the Russian Church Abroad. For in her is truth, in her is the voice of genuine Orthodoxy. In our times they are trying to destroy it by way of schisms. And the latest schism is now being created by you. You could not have failed to realize that your words and actions directed towards rapprochement with the MP would bring about a division, so far only on the level of ideas, within the ROCA, a division between those who support and those who oppose your position. So you have

preferred unity with the apostate and heretical MP to inner unity with the Mother Church which gave you birth - the Church Abroad. This is your decision! But do not attempt to pour oil on the fire by deliberately accusing all those who disagree with you of hindering God’s work. It is they who are doing God’s work.”

#### *X. The Last Word on “Dialogue” and “Love”*

So the dialogue initiated by the representatives of the Diocese of Germany of the ROCA with the representatives of the same diocese of the MP is, we are convinced, purely ecumenical in nature, although the participants on the ROCA side are far from sharing the ecumenist ideology. As in the ecumenical movement, in this dialogue much is said of the division of the Russian Church into different parts, as a result of which it is essential to overcome this division with love. And even when this suddenly occurs to those involved in the dialogue and they try to escape from blatantly ecumenical categories of thought, they find themselves forced to repeat the same thing that the ecumenists say, which is that although the Church is visibly divided, it is invisibly, somewhere in its deepest essence, nevertheless one.... So our participants in the discussion with the MP have fallen into the ecumenical trap which they have laid for themselves.

But still, how are we to treat the MP; should we really not speak to them at all? In fact the dialogue between the ROCA and the MP has been continuing since 1927, without breaking off for a single day! And, by contrast with Vladika Mark’s dialogue, this is a real dialogue, full of genuine love on the part of the ROCA, and does not involve playing at “equal rights”.

In countless books, articles, sermons and letters the ROCA has called upon and continues to this day to call upon the MP really to repent, before God and its own people of the Church, of the sin of Sergianist apostasy, and put an end to it, and of the ecumenist heresy, and to put an end to it as well. It calls upon it, after cleansing itself through this repentance, to join in the glorification of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia already initiated by the ROCA, and only after all this, to



think about holding a common All-Russian Church Council.

These appeals have varied in tone between calmness, anger, exhortation and reproof. But they have always been filled with pain for Russia, for its deceived Orthodox people, and in this pain is real love.

Only in this way can the real Orthodox Church, as the Body of Christ, and whose head is Christ Himself, talk to, and carry on dialogue with, those who have fallen away from it. This has been in the very nature of the Church from the beginning. Here for example is what that well known defender of Orthodoxy, St. Maximus the Confessor, said in the 7<sup>th</sup> century: "I do not desire heretics to be tormented and do not rejoice in their evil — God forbid! But I rejoice the more so in their conversion.... I have not so far lost my reason as to value mercilessness above love for others.... But despite this I say that heretics cannot be helped by confirming them in their insane beliefs; here one has to be blunt and uncompromising. For I call it not love, but hatred for one's fellow men and a falling away from Divine love when anyone confirms heretics in their errors, leading to the inevitable perdition of these people." This is why the ROCA has never confirmed the MP in its errors by hypocritically recognizing its "lawfulness" and "fullness," the "grace of its Church life," or that it is supposedly a "part" of the one Russian Church, for the inevitable perdition of whatever is still alive in the MP.

To this day the MP has responded to this blunt and uncompromising approach only with cunning,

lies, slander, deception, intrigue and attempts to create schisms in the ROCA. How the MP will respond in the future is for it to decide. So the dialogue is not finished; it continues. And this is the only kind of dialogue that is possible, not an ecumenistic dialogue of false, deceptive "love". As I was finishing work on this article, I received two documents: a letter from Archbishop Mark to the members of the Synod of the ROCA dated 30 January / 12 February 1998, and his Lenten letter to his flock dated 17 February / 2 March 1998. The Lenten letter notes that the activities of Vladika Mark, especially the "Declaration" of the participants of the 9<sup>th</sup> conference in December 1997, had "stirred up a storm" within the Church Abroad. However, in both documents Archbishop Mark blames anyone and anything except himself. He retains all his views on the need for rapprochement with the MP. At the same time he writes of the desirability of open discussion of all these problems. It is a sorry sight to behold a bishop of the Church Abroad being increasingly "swallowed up by the monster" of the cunning and lies of the Moscow Patriarchate. Are there any "hands and feet," which, to use his vivid expression, "we can still grasp hold of," in order to tear Vladika out of the clutches of this monster? And who is there that could do it?

Archpriest Lev Lebedeff  
Great Lent 1998  
Kursk

*What would Father Lev say of the  
spectacle which we behold today?*

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## ST. JULIAN OF THE EUPHRATES

### WHOM THE CHURCH CELEBRATES ON THE 18<sup>TH</sup> OF OCTOBER

Our righteous father Julian<sup>1</sup> abandoned the world and those in it and went to the banks of the Euphrates River. He found a cave by the river and spent his life there as a hermit. Many others joined him in that setting and imitated him. They built huts and they numbered as many as one hundred. They shouldered the many hardships of the holy Julian and survived on the same nourishment as he

Once, the amazing Julian saw a dragon that strayed

in his path, and slew that creature with the sign of the Cross. Later he went on to Mt. Sinai and decided to build a church on the same rock on which the lawgiver Moses saw God, as much as is possible for a human being to see Him. That church may be seen there to this day. When the impious Julian the apostate went to Persia, many Christians feared that he might pass by their territory and undermine the Church of Christ. So they went to St. Julian and pleaded with him to deliver



them by his prayers from his evil designs. The blessed father consented to their pleas and extended his prayer for ten days. As a result of this he heard a voice from above which said, "Not only for your sake, but for the prayers and supplications of many other saintly brethren,<sup>2</sup> the defiled and scurrilous beast Julian the apostate is being killed off at this moment." Not long afterwards, the great Meletius of Antioch was driven out of that city and some of the Christians of that town entreated St. Julian to come and give them his blessing so that they might be consoled by his soul-saving exhortations. He consented and went.

On the way to Antioch, he was taken in by a pious lady who offered him hospitality. She had a seven year old child. As the saint sat at the table and the lady was preparing the food, the boy slipped away from his mother's watchful eye and accidentally fell into a well. The pious woman knew of this but never changed her demeanor, nor did she show any sign of fear. But with great faith and fortitude she ministered to the saint.<sup>3</sup> The latter inquired about the child repeatedly but the courageous woman did not tell him what had happened. She pretended that her child was ill. Behold her courage and faith! But St. Julian continued to ask for her son, that he might come to the table and receive a blessing. For this she told him what had occurred.

At once the righteous one arose from the table and exposed the well which the woman had covered, and behold the miracle! He saw the boy sitting on the surface of the water and he played as he moved his hands. So Julian ordered someone who chanced to be there to draw him out of the well. After the boy was raised up and out of the well, they asked him if he had been injured. The boy answered that nothing bad had happened to him because he was held up by an elder who spoke and comforted him inside the well.

When the righteous one went to Antioch, he visited the grotto where St. Paul used to hide a long time ago. At the same time a great throng of Christians came to visit him at the cave in order to take his blessing, and to be set aright by his teachings. At that point the saint contracted a high fever and lay prone, unable to breathe freely or speak. Those brethren who accompanied him impressed upon him that many Christians were waiting outside the cave so that he would come out and give them his blessing. He answered them, "If the Lord deems that my health is important, He will restore it to me." So he said a prayer and delivered himself from the high fever that seared

him, for the betterment of the many Christians. When he was on his way to Constantinople, the queen of cities, a diseased man lay on the road; he reached up and took hold of his antiquated garment, and behold the miracle! He was healed at once and stood up and followed the righteous one, as did the crippled man who was raised up and followed the Apostles John and Peter. The sick man was not only healed of his bodily illness but also spiritually. He was not well-versed in the Orthodox faith, but was bolstered by Julian.

As he was returning to his little shack, he passed by the city of Kyros. The Christians of that city approached him earnestly and begged him saying, "O servant of God! We await the arrival of the scurvy Asterios<sup>4</sup> instead of our own bishop. Therefore remain with us and assist us spiritually so that he will not dissuade us from Orthodoxy with his rhetorical and sophisticated tongue." The holy one consented and stayed with them. He made an all-night prayer with a few others which resulted in Asterios' death. He was stricken with an epidemic sent by God and lived only one day, and this was unendurable and painful. St. Julian returned to his disciples and lived with them for many years. Then he departed to the Lord in peace.

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<sup>1</sup> The life of the righteous Julian was written by Theodoretus in his *Philotheus History* Vol. II. St. John Chrysostom in his twenty-first homily to the Ephesians mentions Julian: "If any one of you know of the man that I am about to extol listen with undivided attention. Julian the wondrous is a rustic and humble man of a lowly background. He may not be trained in secular wisdom but he is replete with the uncreated wisdom. For his name is more illustrious than that of great secular kings.

<sup>2</sup> This prediction that the saint made about Julian the apostate is quoted by Theodoretus in Vol. III of his *Ecclesiastical History*, chapter 16.

<sup>3</sup> A similar incident occurred at the time of Theodosius the Cœnobiarch which is described in his life on January 11. See p. 170, Vol. I of our own *Synaxaristes*.

<sup>4</sup> This Asterios was an Arian. Thus says Sozomenus of him: "He took his sophistry to Cappadocia with him. But when he did not discuss philosophy he taught the Bible. He was a writer of sermons which are read to this day. And in them he propagates the doctrine of Arius." [Sozomenus, *Church History* Vol. I].

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